



The Rail Gunner Weekly

41st Fires Brigade



1-21 FA



2-20 FA



589th BSB



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Deep Strike 6,7 reflect 2

Top, wife look back 3

Awards 4



Rail Gunner Weekly Staff

Commander

Col. Richard M. Francey Jr.

Command Sergeant Major

Command Sgt. Maj. Kelvin A. Hughes

Rail Gunner PAO OIC

1st Lt. Tanyia Bryant

Rail Gunner PAO NCOIC

Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson

Page Designer/Staff Writer

Sgt. Allison Churchill



41st Fires Brigade

Rail Gunners!

www.41stfiresbrigade.com

Rail Gunner PAO

SFC Joe Thompson

FOB Delta

APD AE 09317

DSN: 314-844-2716

E-mail:

joe.thompson@iraq.centcom.mil

JSS Ezdehar back in Iraqi hands

By Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson
41st Fires Bde. PAO

U.S. Forces handed over the responsibility of Joint Security Station Ezdehar, near Shaykh Sa'ad in Wasit Province, to the Iraqi Army in a ceremony at the JSS June 8.

Captain Mark Terwilleger, 67th Forward Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade signed over the JSS to Maj. Jabbar Juma Abid, 3rd Company, 3rd Battalion, 32nd Iraqi Army Brigade.

"We celebrate today the occasion of receiving JSS Ezdehar at Shaykh Sa'ad from the coalition forces

and the handing over of the security and the responsibilities to the Iraqi Armed Forces who are represented by the 3rd Company," said Lt. Col. Majid Feza'd Sekhi, 3rd Bn., 32nd IA Bde., commander.

"We hope this is a charitable beginning of our armed forces, establishing a new prosperous and stable Iraq and continuing dignity under the shadow of the new democratic government and the sovereignty of law," added Majid in his speech during the ceremony.

"One year ago today the Soldiers of the Deep Strike battalion deployed into the Iraq theater of operations, ready to take on whatever challenges lay in front of us, but ultimately uncertain of our mission,

our role and most importantly what conditions we would face," said Lt. Col. Timothy Bush, 2nd Bn., 20th FA Regt., commander.

"Today exactly twelve months later, we take a brief moment to celebrate the spirit of the Iraqi people, specifically our brothers in the Iraqi Army," added Bush.

The Soldiers of 67th FSC took over control of the JSS in August 2008 after the Georgian Army pulled out of Iraq to help with the crisis in their own country. The Iraqi Army joined them in the days that followed.

"Today ten months later, we depart not as strangers, but as brothers," said Bush of the partnership between the two armed forces.

The 3rd Battalion, 32nd Iraqi Army Brigade now controls and manages two joint security stations from which they will continue securing and patrolling the areas surrounding the JSSs. JSS Mutanabe was handed over to Iraqi control May 28.

"In my capacity as the commander of the battalion and whose responsibility of the JSS falls under my command, I pledge before God and the audience that I will do my best to maintain the security and stability of this city, and all the cities within the area of my responsibility," said Majid.

The last joint security station that 2nd Bn., 20th FA Regt., has Soldiers partnered with Iraqi Security Forces is scheduled to be handed over within the next couple of weeks.



The Iraqi Army color guard salutes the Iraqi flag after raising it, symbolizing that the Iraqi Army now has control of the JSS.

By Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson, 41st Fires Bde. PAO

Deep Strike reflects at the one-year mark

Greetings to everyone in the extended Deep Strike family — our Soldiers, leaders, families and friends:

My pride in the Deep Strike battalion, the Army's first and only Bad Ass Battalion, is infinite, and with the glorious end of our journey on the horizon, I'd like to take a moment to review where we've been and what we've achieved.

In January 2008, the situation in Iraq was dire. The fledgling Iraqi government was ill-equipped to provide the Iraqi people with security and essential services, and the Iraqi security forces were powerless to defeat a persistent insurgency that undercut any progress in Iraq.

Against this dire backdrop, our nation and our Army called on the Deep Strike battalion to execute a difficult and dangerous mission: we received orders to reorganize and deploy into the incredibly volatile Wasit province as a security force battalion.

At the time that we received these orders, we were a highly-trained MLRS Battalion, the best in the Army, but untrained as a counterinsurgency infantry battalion. As the insurgency relentlessly churned and Iraq descended into chaos, the Soldiers and the leaders of the Deep Strike battalion swallowed their fears, shouldered the difficult mission that the Army handed us, and moved out on the hard business of reorganizing into a motorized infantry battalion, retraining on a different set of combat skills and preparing to deploy into combat for the third time in five years.

As I write this today in June of 2009, a mere 18 months later, the situation in Iraq and Wasit province is exponentially improved. We've achieved a level of peace, security and stability in Wasit province that

would have been inconceivable in 2007.

The Shia insurgency in the Deep Strike area of operations is largely defeated and the Iraqi security forces in Wasit province possess the upper hand; they are professional and competent, inspired and trained through their yearlong partnership with the Soldiers of the Deep Strike battalion.

Simultaneously, the government of Iraq is markedly improved; political officials who were democratically chosen in elections that we helped secure are working towards providing essential services and economic opportunity to a people starved for peace and prosperity after 30 years of dictatorship and six years of strife and war. The Deep Strike battalion has catalyzed a renaissance in Iraq.

In short, the Soldiers of the Deep Strike battalion stepped in to the breach and turned the tide of history. Through their selfless service, personal courage, and perseverance, we have bought the Iraqi people time to create a stable and secure democracy. We have made friends along the way and the Soldiers of the Deep Strike battalion will always be remembered in Wasit province as heroes and saviors: ambassadors of freedom and emissaries of a kind and just people.

To the Soldiers of the Deep Strike Battalion: We have changed the course of history and we have had an immeasurable impact on the future of the region. The world is a better place for future generations because of what we have done.

Make no mistake — that's Bad Ass.

Thanks for your service, Deep Strike.

Lt. Col. Tim Bush, Deep Strike 6



Left: Lt. Col. Timothy Bush, 2-20 FA commander, leads students from Al Enteserat Primary School onto Joint Security Station Ezdahar May 22 for Operation London Calling, a video teleconference with students at Meadow Elementary School on Fort Hood.

Middle: Soldiers from Battery A, 2-20 FA, stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Iraqi police from Special Reaction Team One during the dedication of JSS Salaam in Numanayah Oct. 6, 2008.

Right: Sgt. 1st Class Lonnie Westbrook (left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Hatfield walk through the streets of Dujaylah during Operation Dirty Deeds, a community trash pick-up day.

Photo by Tech. Sgt. Thomas Coney, 1st Combat Camera Squadron

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson, 41st Fires Bde. PAO

To the Family, Friends, Soldiers, Noncommissioned Officers and Officers of the BAB,

A year has passed and with just a few months left, I look back to a year of magnificent gains and I find myself struggling to put into words my pride and give you the credit and praise you so deserve.

First and foremost, I want to thank the Families back home for everything they do on a daily basis. You have endured so many hardships, yet your patriotism shines through with each and every e-mail, phone call or care package sent. Your support did not go unnoticed! You walked over 9,800 miles in the Walk to Iraq and Back program, by far the most in the brigade, and true evidence of your will to show every military spouse what right looks like. You are our bedrock, cornerstone, and our pillar of life. Most of us would be nothing without you — you are the true heroes of American society, and we thank you for all your sacrifices!

This year has been an amazing year and our Soldiers have completed so much in such a small amount of time. You have proven that you are the ambassadors of freedom, one patrol or one kind gesture at a time. You did what few other battalions in Wasit province could do — you gave the Iraqi people a glimmer of hope. You occupied dilapidated Georgian check points with only eight hours notice and made it home. You lived, ate, patrolled, shared stories with your Iraqi partners and put an Iraqi Security Forces face

on all actions. Whether it was the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, the Commando Soldiers on the desolate border of Iran or even the staff of the ISF, you professionalized the ISF through your will and values.

Standards and discipline were your foundation. You logged over 240,000 miles and conducted over 1,400 combat patrols, all while never bending or breaking the Deep Strike Flat Ass Rules. Your operations with school kids, daily professionalism of local councils and your daily humanitarian missions have made a lasting impression on all of Wasit Province. Future generations of Iraqis will thank you someday.

You are the envy of each and every Soldier on FOB Delta as they wish they could have made a difference like you have. You are one of few battalions that have been kissing babies, hugging ladies and bringing democracy to this war torn province. Your hard work and dedication is a true testament of the intestinal fortitude that you possess.

You all are the GI Joe or Jane Soldiers of America's military and understood that an MOS was irrelevant to this fight. As we head home and our families welcome us back with open arms, hold your heads high. You are part of the one percent of America that Hollywood couldn't even portray — an American Soldier!

Thanks for the ride, Deep Strike, Bad Ass

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Hatfield, Deep Strike 7

Senior NCO and wife look back on 20 years

By Sgt. Allison Churchill
41st Fires Bde. PAO

Jim and Theresa Childers almost didn't get married in 1989.

Their first conflict came early on – she was dating his roommate originally.

"Initially we didn't like each other at all, but as we got to know each other, I realized how sweet of a guy he really was," said Theresa, who was 21 when they started dating.

Then Jim's family had to accept that he was getting married.

"Initially, my family wasn't that accepting, mostly because I was the baby of the family, and in my mom's and my sisters' eyes, no one was good enough for me," said Jim, first sergeant of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 41st Fires Brigade, who was 22 at the time.

And worst, Jim almost missed his own wedding.

"I was on the bus to deploy to Panama and would be gone for my wedding," said Jim.

In spite of everything, they made it to the altar and on May 28 celebrated 20 years of marriage.

Their problems worked themselves out. Jim's commander heard about the wedding, and put him on rear detachment so he could get married, although "for our first year of marriage, I was deployed or in the field for about eight months," said Jim.

When their families met, they discovered that Jim and Theresa's fathers, both Navy veterans, had served on the same ship at one point. Jim's sisters also "fell in love with" Theresa, whom Jim described as a "drop-dead gorgeous" California girl.

Twenty years later, Jim and Theresa credit humor for keeping them close.

"It's all about having fun, keeping your life interesting and always make each other laugh," said Jim, whom Theresa said has gotten funnier over their time together.

The couple also appreciates their two children: Chelsea, 16, and Cody, 15.

"Theresa and I have been blessed with two of the greatest, and I'm not just saying that because they are my kids," said Jim. "They are just good people who are going to make society a much better place."

"My children are always there for me if Jim isn't here," said Theresa, of Jim's four deployments to Operation Iraqi Freedom. "They are my rock and they always keep me busy."

Other couples can avoid becoming a military divorce statistic -- the Army divorce rate for enlisted personnel stood at 3.9 percent in 2008, according to <http://usmilitary.about.com/od/divorce/a/divorcerate.htm>



First Sgt. Jim Childers, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 41st Fires Brigade, and his wife of 20 years, Theresa, on one of their first dates at a Medieval Times near Fort Ord, Calif., where he was stationed in 1989.

Photo courtesy of Theresa Childers

-- with compromise, Jim said. Neither he nor Theresa had been married previously.

"When you think you have compromised enough, compromise some more," he said.

Jim and Theresa will be reunited again when the 41st Fires Brigade redeploys to Fort Hood later this summer.



First Sgt. Jim Childers (right), Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 41st Fires Brigade, and his wife of 20 years, Theresa, enjoy the sunshine during his mid-tour leave in Harker Heights, Texas.

Photo courtesy of 1st Sgt. Jim Childers, HHB, 41st Fires Bde.

Worship Opportunities Sunday

<i>Chapel 1</i>	
Traditional Protestant	0900
Latter-day Saints	1030
Gospel Service	1300
Reconciliation service	1830
Catholic Mass (English)	1930

Monday

<i>Chapel 1</i>	
Catholic Mass	0800

Tuesday

<i>Mayor Cell</i>	
Bible Study	1930
<i>Chapel 1</i>	
Bible Study	2000

Thursday

<i>TMC</i>	
Bible Study	1930

Saturday

<i>Chapel 1</i>	
Catholic Mass	0800
Christian Movie Night	2000

Radar team receives awards before departure



Command Sgt. Maj. Kelvin Hughes, 41st Fires Brigade and FOB Delta's senior enlisted leader, presents the Rail Gunner Certificate of Appreciation to Soldiers from 3rd Radar Section, Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Regiment: Sgt. Kenneth Young, radar section chief; Sgt. Dustin Farris, senior firefinder operator; Spc. Eugene Goepf, firefinder operator; Spcs. Christopher Casper and Justin Veselic, radar repairers; and Pv2 Jack Rodriguez, firefinder operator. The team was on FOB Delta for 11 months before handing the reigns of the site over to Battery E (Target Acquisition) 151st FA.

*Photo courtesy of
Command Sgt. Maj. Kelvin Hughes
41st Fires Bde.*

More farewells



Above: Jason Clark, electronic warfare technician, thanks his team after receiving the Rail Gunner Certificate of Appreciation June 12 at 41st Fires Brigade headquarters. Below: Roberto "Bobby" Bran, the last of the original Wasit Provincial Reconstruction Team members, holds up his "Commander's Award for Civilian Service" certificate June 8 in the 41st Fires Brigade conference room.

*Photos by Sgt. Allison Churchill
41st Fires Bde. PAO*



Soldiers recognized for board achievements



Top: Col. Dick Francey, 41st Fires Brigade commander, presents Spc. Nathan Alford, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 41st Fires Bde., with a Certificate of Achievement at brigade headquarters June 12 for his success on the Separate Unit Soldier of the Month board. Alford received another CoA for winning the Separate Unit Soldier of the Quarter for the second quarter of fiscal year 2009. Sgt. Billy Marsh, also of HHB, won the NCO of the Month board and also received the CoA.



Middle: Francey presents a CoA to Spc. Cole Brown, 1st Battalion, 77th Field Artillery Regiment, for winning the second quarter 41st Fires Brigade Soldier of the Quarter board.



Bottom: Command Sgt. Maj. Kelvin Hughes, 41st Fires Bde., congratulates Sgt. Johnny Baker, 2-20 FA Regt., for winning the 41st Fires Brigade Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter Board.

*Photos by Sgt. Allison Churchill
41st Fires Bde. PAO*